

The Ballarat Naturalist

September 2014



FNCB Members' Night

1. Power Point Presentation by Val Hocking

In September 2013 I joined a two-week bus tour of the southern half of Western Australia which had a particular focus on wild flowers and also on a number of sites of interest to field naturalists.

First was the spectacular Wave Rock, roughly south of Kalgoorlie. Wave Rock is one of the oldest rocks in the world and is part of the northern face of Hyden Rock. It is about 15 metres high and about 110 metres long. The shape of the wave is formed by gradual erosion over many centuries of the softer rock beneath the upper edge. During the wet season, water from springs constantly runs down the cliff. The rain dissolves and deposits chemicals (carbonates and iron oxide), leaving red, brown, yellow and grey stains on the rock. The vertical black lines of the rock are also caused by water pouring down the cliff after heavy rains during the wet season and by algae.



Later in the tour we visited Shark Bay, north of Geraldton, home to the wild dolphins that are sparingly fed and researched daily at Monkey Mia. We also visited nearby Hamelin Pool, a high saline water environment and home of the Stromatolites which are viewed from a signposted elevated boardwalk. Stromatolites look like a cross between a cauliflower and a rock. However, unlike rocks they are

actually alive – each Stromatolite has a top surface layer teeming with living, active cyanobacteria. Cyanobacteria, like plants, photosynthesise their energy from the sun. A by-product of photosynthesis is oxygen, and if you look very carefully you may see the stromatolites gently ‘fizzing’ as tiny bubbles of oxygen are released into the water by the cyanobacteria.

At the beginning and the end of the tour, we visited Kings Park in Perth and took many photos of the flower displays which were at their seasonal best. The Western Australian Botanic Garden section of Kings Park is an 18 hectare site within the park and has a collection of 2000 species of Western Australian flora on display. There were beautiful display gardens of many flowering plants. Plants are grouped according to region or type of country such as granite outcrop, sand plain, northern and arid areas, with additional categories for critically endangered and winter-wet. The 2,800 square metre Banksia Garden houses the entire State collection of 62 banksias.

Val Hocking

2. Birds of Britain by John Mildren and John Morrish.

Having spent time in the luxuriously appointed bird hides at the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds’ sanctuary known as Minsmere in East Anglia, and travelled around Britain with a couple of other keen bird observers, John and John presented some great insights and photos of the birds they saw on their trip.

Emily Noble

August Excursion to the Melbourne Aquarium

Five Field Nats took the train to Melbourne to visit the Aquarium.

Val has submitted these two photos of Penguins and Sea Horse.



Also Val said the group experienced all that was advertised about the Aquarium in the July edition of “*The Field Naturalist*”.

Copies of files from Graeme Ambrose

Graeme Ambrose has kindly offered to bring his laptop to the next meeting. So if interested in downloading his guides to the identification of mosses, lichens, etc., bring a USB Stick to the Sept meeting.

Saturday Excursion 6 Sept: “Lilwarre” in Scarsdale. .

Photo: *Liwarre* wetland in the snow

Emily and Peter Noble invite us to enjoy their 40-acre bush block nestled in Monkey Gully, Scarsdale adjacent to Enfield State Forest. The address of ***Lilwarre*** is 98 Corio Dam Rd, Scarsdale. To



get there from Ballarat, take the Glenelg Highway out to Smythesdale and meet at the property at 10am. Further details provided at the Friday meeting or at the normal excursion meeting place. Wear solid shoes and bring your lunch. Fresh water and toilet facilities are available on site.

Perhaps if you bring your binoculars and favourite field guides, a few new species can be added to the already extensive lists.



Photo:The Galahs at *Lilwarre*, protecting each other’s backs, tried their version of the intimidating Maori haka to scare this unpleasant intruder away. Very effective against birds that have the cheek to land on THEIR tree, but amazingly, it didn’t work on the snow.

Mid-month activities for September	
Tues 16	Mid-month excursion to Mt Beckworth and Clunes 9.30am – 4.00pm.
Sat 20	Canadian Forest Multi-Use Park launch. 11.30am at Earth Ed Centre, Olympic Avenue, Mt Clear. BYO food for lunch, bbq available.

July meeting: Show and Tell Reports

Margaret Thomas has had four juvenile Crimson Rosellas simultaneously at her bird feeder at Nerrina, and she watched a Darter at St Georges Lake in Creswick move into the water from a stick protruding out of the lake, and swim with just its head protruding. She has also had a pair of Galahs on her nature strip and Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos flying overhead.

Peter Muller found a colony of green and white striped Greenhoods (possibly *Pterostylis striata*) in Box-Ironbark Forest at Timor, near Maryborough. He has yet to confirm their identity.

Jane Marriott was delighted to see two Brolgas and two Pelicans in a swamp approx. 10 km from Clunes at a homestead in Glendaruel Rd. She also saw many honeyeaters in the flowering Yellow Gums *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* along roadsides in Hepburn Shire.

Mike Sorrell saw 3-4 pairs of very healthy Willy Wagtails, 1 Black Eagle, 1 Osprey and many exceptional River Red Gums *Eucalyptus camaldulensis* along the south shore of Lake Burrumbeet. At Lake Wendouree, he spied a Blue-billed Duck near the start of the Rowing Course.

Carol Hall saw 15 Freckled Ducks in the silt trap near the Olympic Rings at Lake Wendouree in mid-May, and watched 8 Little Black Cormorants co-operatively fishing at Lake Wendouree in June.

Emily Noble has observed the first leaves of Bronze Bird-orchids *Chiloglottis X pescottiana* and Wax-lip Orchids *Glossodia major* at her Scarsdale block, with the Emerald-lip Greenhoods *Pterostylis smaragdyna* now flowering there and in Enfield State Forest nearby. The Tall Greenhoods *Pterostylis melagramma* and Nodding Greenhoods *Pterostylis nutans* are budding, and the Veined Helmet Orchids *Corybas diemenicus* are budding and flowering.

Paul Norquay recorded more precipitation than evaporation for the first time in many months at his property in Mt Egerton, and has implemented a reasonably successful diversion program of leaving out orange peel to distract the Ring-tail Possums from the rind of the lemons on his tree.

David Coutts, our newest member, heard a Fan-tailed Cuckoo calling at about 7am at Clarksdale Bird Sanctuary one morning this week.

August Meeting: Show and Tell Reports

Mike Sorrell thanked Helen Burgess for allowing him to translocate some Nodding Greenhoods *Pterostylis nutans* from her garden to his place where they are now flowering happily.

Emily Noble was glad that no-one had a video camera ready when she demonstrated how a pair of Galahs nesting in a hollow tree on her wetland responded to the first snow she (and apparently they) had ever seen at her block in Scarsdale. They went from indignant to aggressive, to confused, to desperate, eventually trying to hide themselves under their own wings. Hilarious! (See p3.)

John Gregurke had an interesting month, sighting 13 Blue-winged Parrots and the new shoots of Common Reed (*Phragmites*) at Lake Burrumbeet, a swan sitting on a nest and Crimson Rosellas feeding on the seeds of *Melaleuca armillaris* at Winter Swamp, and at Mt Beckworth, early flowering Nodding and Dwarf Greenhoods (*Pterostylis nutans* & *P. nana*), Early Nancy (*Wurmbea dioica*) and Scented Sundew (*Drosera whittakeri* ssp. *aberrans*).

Wayne McGuire had the good fortune of seeing a Swamp Harrier and a Spotted Harrier, both juveniles, at Lake Burrumbeet, as well as the colourful site of 6 Flame Robins at a vineyard in Warracknabeal.

Paul Norquay has had a quail wandering around his Mt Egerton garden, and it apparently sheltered from the snow in his carport. He also saw an Echidna crossing the road at Yendon and, whilst out in Sandon Forest with Bill Murphy, excitedly found the Robust Greenhood *Pterostylis robusta*.

Les Hanrahan was able to get to within 20m of a Wedge-tailed Eagle sitting on a fence post before it took evasive action in Bungaree.

Peter Billing saw flocks of Corellas at Lake Wendouree a couple of weeks ago, with Cormorants also prominent and 5 Pelicans on the shore.

Carol Hall spotted a solitary Pelican on the shore of Lake Wendouree.

Our newest member, Graeme Ambrose, was lucky enough to see a flock of 10 – 15 Lorikeets flying overhead in Buninyong. He thought that they were probably Purple-crowned Lorikeets, judging by their call.

Extracts from the minutes of 1 Aug Meeting, 2014

Opening and Apologies

Attendance: 17 members welcomed by Acting President, John Mil-dren on this icy night.

Apologies: Peter & Claire Dalman, Fran Hanrahan, Andy Arnold, Bill Murphy, Mike Sorrell, David Coutts, Dulcie Brooke, John Petheram & Ken Hammond.

Business Arising from Previous Meeting:

Renewal by Les H. of Affiliated Club Membership and Public Liability Insurance with Royal Horticultural Society of Victoria.

John G represented the Club at the Redan Wetland Funday, taking along the Club banner, copies of the FNCB syllabus and Wattles of Ballarat books as well as samples of 15 local wattles to illustrate his interesting short talk to attendees. Good attendance and almost 2m³ of rubbish was collected by volunteers along the Yarrowee River.

Upload of the Club's new Constitution onto the FNCB website yet to be completed.

Correspondence IN:

Emails from: Environment Victoria appeal for Victorians to make the environment a key election issue in the wake of the Senate vote to repeal Australia's carbon price: Get in touch with your MP,

Executive Director, Fire and Emergency Management, DEPI, on behalf of Dr Paul Smith responding to a letter that we were a signatory to in March, of concerns about threatened species monitoring and protection in Planned burn sites, and back-logged flora and fauna survey data that needs to be added to the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas.

From David Grant, City of Ballarat: thanks for nominating trees for the Exceptional Tree Register and offer for one of our members to put in an Expression of Interest to represent the community on the five-person Expert Panel assessing the nominations.

OUT:

To Club members: Online surveys about the Yarrowee River from Leigh Catchment Group. and the effect of fire on our perception of National Parks.

To Office of Living Victoria: Submission of feedback on the

“Ballarat and Region Water Future Draft Strategy”.

To Club members: E-bulletin “Nature’s Voice” from VNPA, July-Aug., 2014.

Business Arising from Correspondence:

Any Club members interested in putting in an Expression of Interest (EOI) to Ballarat City Council to be the Community Representative on the Expert Panel to assess Exceptional Tree nominations? Yes, Paul Norquay is interested. **Action:** John Gregurke will email Paul the Expression of Interest document. Mike Sorrell is also interested and may put in an EOI too.

Anyone interested in attending the AGM of the Royal Horticultural Society in South Melbourne as the Club’s representative? No. **Action:** Secretary to arrange posting of proxy vote.

Reports Treasurer's Report: Opening balance \$6,142.35 Income \$221.79 Expenses \$268.09 Closing balance: \$6096.05

Other reports: How Ants run ecosystems in Australia and around the World, by Alex Wild at Newstead Community Centre on July 6th. This was a wonderful, engaging and fascinating talk about an intriguing and complex world. Around 130 people attended! Elspeth has put links to Alex’s website, showcasing his amazing macro photos of insects, and *Antwiki* on the Club’s website if anyone is interested in undertaking further investigations into the ant world.

General Business

The Club warmly welcomes new member, Graeme Ambrose!

There are still a few copies of Moths of Victoria and Mosses of South-east Australia that haven’t been picked up by the members that ordered them. See Les H. after the meeting to pick up your copy. Does anyone know Jon Robinson or Gloria Salt who visited the Club the night we took orders, and both ordered books? We currently have no contact details for them.

The library: just a reminder that there are lots of fabulous books in the Club’s library, as well as the newsletters we receive from other clubs each month.

Emily is updating the Club’s Membership Database. Members checked a spreadsheet that had been printed up, adjusting any details as required. It will be brought along again to the next Club Meeting.

CALENDAR 2014

September

- Fri 5 *Carbon Dioxide: Plant Food or Pollutant*-Prof Tausz & Dr
Tausz-Posch Plant physiologists, Melb. Uni, Creswick
- Sat 6** Exc: *Survey of Smythesdale block*- E Noble, Club
member (See p3.)
- Tues 16 Mid-month exc. to Mt Beckworth and Clunes. (See p.3)
- Tues 23 Committee meeting at Val Hocking's
- Sat 20 FOCC activity (See p.3)

October

- Fri 3 Stella Bedggood Memorial Lecture : *Birds of Prey-*"
Nursing the Fierce" - Martin Scuffins, Raptor Expert
- Sun 5 Exc: *Grampians Hinterland & Wildflowers* –Claire
Dalman, Club member

Committee

President Peter Dalman
Vice –President..... Fran Hanrahan
Secretary Emily Noble
Treasurer Les Hanrahan

Claire Dalman	Val Hocking
John Gregurke	John Mildren
Wayne McGuire	

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Meetings are held at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr and Gregory Sts, on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm..

Excursions: Leave from the carpark at the Primary Industries Training Centre, cnr Gillies and Gregory Sts. at 9.30 am, unless otherwise advised.

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